

INTRODUCTION

The rich loam of Philadelphia history holds enticing secrets for the researcher willing to unearth them, beckoning him to browse engagingly along many an irrelevant bypath. Yet the story of any corps or body of involved persons must largely be the story of its people and its place of involvement. To research the Corps of Engineers' work in the Philadelphia District is to unfold a story rich with the life of a proud old American community.

Famous firsts abound in the area. Here were fashioned a new nation and a unique charter of freedom. The early history of American science and invention centers largely about Philadelphia, whose pioneers in engineering and applied science evolved new designs for the young nation: its first steamboat, first canal, first locomotive, first printing press, first engineer school; its many institutions of art, philosophy and medicine.

As the bell signalling birth of the nation first rang, the Corps was already a yearling,

committed to a career of dedicated service which it has maintained for the nearly two centuries of its existence. Conceived as the technical arm of the military forces, it has developed into the world's largest engineering entity, with capabilities expanded beyond its original military mission, enabling it to respond to a variety of needs, from the prevention and relief of natural disasters to recreation planning.

The History of the Philadelphia District, Corps of Engineers begins officially in 1866. Since then the burgeoning eastern megalopolis in which it is centered has evolved into the most densely populated and industrially developed area in the Nation. This concentration of population and industry has generated formidable problems for the public welfare. These are of continuing concern to the Philadelphia Engineer District. The following pages contain a succinct and, hopefully, comprehensive account of that concern.